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AUTUMN IN THE GARDEN

BY DAVID PAYNE



WE OFTEN CREDIT SPRING AND SUMMER FLOWERS FOR CREATING COLORFUL, EYE-CATCHING LANDSCAPES, BUT WE SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK THE POTENTIAL OF SHOWY FALL PLANTS.

Here are seven trees and shrubs that are perfect for North Carolina landscapes to continue the color explosion into autumn.

OSMANTHUS: Also known as Tea Olive, this shrub or small tree, depending on how it is pruned, has beautiful white, fragrant flowers in the spring and in the fall. It is a two-for-one shrub,

as the white flowers are long lasting but also provide a heavenly scent that wafts throughout the yard.

GARDENIA: Another wonderfully fragrant shrub, white gardenia flowers in both spring and fall. Blooms last a long time, usually several weeks, and gardenias are a good specimen for those homeowners who want low-maintenance plants. With both heirloom and new varieties, there is sure to be a cultivar to please.

ENCORE AZALEA: This repeat bloomer produces showy flowers in spring, summer, and fall. With a wide range of colors and

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both intermediate and dwarf sizes, Encore Azaleas are a good fit as foundational plantings, in short hedges, and even in containers that can be moved around as fill-in color where needed. In addition to blooming in three seasons, these azaleas are beloved for their low maintenance, no-deadheading personality, their attraction of butterflies and hummingbirds, and because they are evergreen. Plant them en masse for a wow factor.

GINKGO TREE: This ancient tree is a native of China that also thrives in our area. Its fan-shaped leaves provide a unique look, particularly when they turn bright yellow in the fall. The colorful leaves rival any flower for ornamental beauty.

BALD CYPRESS: You may not first think of a deciduous conifer as a fall stunner, but these trees' needle-like leaves exhibit an airy, feathery texture that turns fiery orange or burnt copper in the fall. The combination of unique texture and color is a winner in the autumn landscape.

WILLOW OAK: A long-lived stalwart specimen in the oak family may at first be overlooked as a fall color producer, but its narrow willow-like leaves turn yellow when temperatures begin to cool down.

OCTOBER GLORY RED MAPLE: We know that red maple trees' leaves turn red in the fall, but the October Glory cultivar is the showiest of them all. Its radiant red leaves last several weeks. It also shows color in the spring with red flowers and fruit that birds enjoy.

It is entirely possible to have color in any season, with autumn bloomers being quite ornate. The best part of incorporating these perennials and trees into your yard is that they require minimal effort and maintenance to produce color season after season for many years. ♦



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